

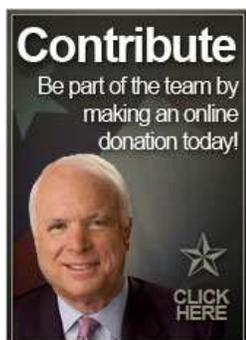


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Address to the Values Voter Summit

October 19, 2007

ARLINGTON, VA -- U.S. Senator John McCain will deliver remarks to the Values Voter Summit today, Friday, October 19th at 9:20 a.m. EDT in Washington, DC. Below are McCain's remarks as prepared for delivery:

Thank you for the honor of speaking before this gathering, and thank you for the work you do in supporting the preservation of the family, the most basic and essential component of any civil society.

I know that before I can win your vote, I have to win your respect. And to do that, you expect me to be honest with you about what I believe. I'm a conservative Republican, and proud of it. I'll match my record of defending conservative principles against any other candidate in this race. I know you might not always agree with me on every issue, but I hope you know I'm not going to con you. One of the most important things we have in this life is our self-respect. I don't expect you trade yours for empty promises. And I'm not going to trade mine for anyone's vote. I'm going to tell you what I believe and let the chips fall where they will.

Some people misunderstand voters who are concerned with something beyond their economic self interest and believe that the demands of self-interest are best served by the priorities of the Democratic Party. I disagree. I believe Republican economic policies, our respect for the dynamism and growth created by free markets, have proved the surest way to help people earn and maintain prosperity. Voting for whomever you believe will bring home the most pork to your state or district is neither in your self-interest nor does it respect the faith we have in a nation that was founded on ideals and not tribal or geographic identities. That is why for my entire political career I have fought against wasteful spending so that American families would have the freedom and means to make their own choices, and to choose, as I hope most would, and as you have, to serve a cause greater than self-interest. I believe that is the perspective and priority of a values voter.

Values are the ideals we hold dear, and are best protected by reviving virtues that are often in short supply in the political arena. Our founding fathers were informed by the respect for human life and dignity that is the foundation of the Judeo-Christian tradition. They are the self-evident truths proclaimed and defended in our founding documents. All people are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. For many of us, the meaningful pursuit of happiness compels us to defend those ideals, and in this hour that summons has never been more urgent as America confronts challenges to its founding values, particularly the sanctity of human life, at home and abroad.

We are involved in both a struggle against Islamic extremism and a struggle to protect America while preserving the values that make it worth protecting. Both of these struggles will demand courage and perseverance on our part and on the part of our leaders. Many American generations have been called to confront evil. My father and grandfather fought fascism. My generation fought communism. Now we are summoned to confront the evil of radical Islamic extremism. There is no denying it is evil. How more evident could it be than in the means our enemies choose to confront us. Their terrorism is not only an assault on our political and economic interests. It is an act of war against our defining ideals. Sacrificing Muslim children in car bombs. Beheading a reporter merely because he is Jewish and American, and broadcasting the atrocity. These are the tactics of people who scorn human life and dignity. And we are summoned to fight them not only by our just concern for our physical security but by the responsibility we have always accepted to support and defend values we believe to be universal.

We need a comprehensive strategy to succeed in this struggle. For nearly three decades we watched the threat build and did little to contain it until it could be ignored no longer after the terrible events of September 11, 2001. Since that time we have joined the battle on multiple fronts. But we are at a crossroads in this global struggle, and we will need a President who has the credibility to lead, the experience to lead wisely, and the strength of will to take the right path, even if it means walking a lonely road. I have spoken elsewhere at length about the strategy I propose. We need a larger military, real intelligence reform, increased contributions from our civilian agencies, and a commitment to victory in Iraq. And we need a comprehensive legal and diplomatic strategy that allows us to battle effectively a modern threat without betraying our ideals. The world is watching, and we live in a time when the images we project cannot be easily erased.

Confronting the threat of Islamic extremists is a battle against external forces, but also involves a personal and social contest with our own fears. We will not surrender to the terrorists, and we must not surrender to our fear. We must resist at all costs the temptation to believe that we can protect America by sacrificing the values that make it worth protecting.

I am not naive. I know very well the tools some governments have resorted to when threatened: indefinite detention without trial, torture of prisoners, and a belief that anything is permissible in dark places where power

is the only law. But these tools are not American tools, and the easy way is not the American way. We must remain true to our ideals not in spite of the threats we face, but because of them. In the decades to come our prosperity and security will depend in part on what people in distant corners of the globe see when they turn their eyes toward America. As President, I would do everything within my power to ensure that they continue to see what they have seen for over two hundred years: a nation that remains fully worthy of Abraham Lincoln's belief that Americans hold in our hands not only the destiny of a single nation but the "last, best hope of earth."

It's not easy to preserve our ideals in the midst of a difficult struggle with those who despise every value we stand for. It's not easy to see the humanity of our enemies, who refuse to acknowledge our humanity, and whose cruelty is so wanton and sickening. The Bible's call to do just that reminds me of the saying that Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, so much as it has been found difficult, and not tried. The consistent message of the Gospels calls us to recognize that all life is sacred because all human beings are created in the image of God, a truth recognized as central in the founding documents of our nation. We have gone to war to defend our security and our values, and that is an enterprise that always involves morally hazardous actions. It is a just war and like all wars it requires the sacrifice and taking of human life. But let us not abandon our humility in its prosecution. War is a terrible thing, not the worst thing, but a terrible thing nonetheless. And our humility, commanded by our faith in our ideals and in a just and loving God, gives us the strength to resist the unnecessary sacrifice of our faith in the necessary cause of defeating our enemies.

When I was a young man I thought glory was the highest ambition and all glory was self-glory. My parents and the Naval Academy tried to teach me otherwise but it wasn't until I had to rely on others to an extent I never thought would be necessary that I understood the lesson. I had to have faith in something greater than myself not only to survive but to survive with my self-respect intact: faith in my comrades; faith in my country; and faith in my God. That faith helped me not only to endure but to understand and respect the values it encompassed. And, thus, in a moment of unexpected compassion that God ordained, I could learn the most valuable lesson of all: how to forgive and to escape the bitterness that could have destroyed my life.

If America stands for anything, it stands for the freedom to follow our own hearts, to determine our own relationship with God. Our constitution did not establish a national religion but neither did it banish any worship. Religious freedom does not require Americans to hide their faith from public view or that communities must refrain from publicly acknowledging the importance to them of faith. We are only abjured from using the law to make those who do not wish to adhere to the creed that we embrace. Judges should not legislate from the bench and actually restrict religious freedom by banning its expression in the public square.

Wisdom is a virtue. Sometimes all wisdom asks of us is that we recognize common sense. Don't federalize issues not addressed in the constitution. Don't constitutionalize issues where federalism has a chance to work. But sometimes, wisdom, as do all other virtues, requires courage. Wisdom suggests we should be reluctant to change a definition of marriage that has existed for thousands of years, but it takes courage in this day and age to insist that a mother and a father have unique and complementary roles in the raising of children, and that marriage reinforces public support for those roles. Wisdom suggests that we should be willing to give an unborn child the same chance that our parents gave us, but it takes courage in this political climate to insist on the protection of unborn children who can't vote, have no voice, and can't reward you with support and donations. Wisdom suggests that when activist federal judges impose their social views on the citizens of every state, the result is going to distort our politics in terrible ways, but it takes courage to insist that the courts have to return to their proper role. I will appoint strict constructionist judges that won't legislate from the bench.

I have been pro-life my entire public career. I believe I am the only major candidate in either party who can make that claim. I am pro-life because I know what it is like to live without human rights, where human life is accorded no inherent value, and I know that I have a personal obligation to advocate human rights wherever they are denied: in Bosnia or Burma, in Cuba or the Middle East; and in our own country when we fail to respect the inherent dignity of all human life, born or unborn. That is a personal testament, which you need not take on faith. You need only examine my public record to know that I won't ever change my position to fit the politics of the day.

Humility is as important as wisdom in our public affairs. It not only assures our fidelity to a cause greater than ourselves -- the defense of our ideals -- but cautions us not to become so complacent in our strength and virtue that we become arrogant in power. This is something that Americans have long understood and must continue to understand. We must preserve room for economic freedom, but recognize the possibility of corruption. We must recognize that government is necessary, but power corrupts. Americans have lost trust in their government. We must restore that trust by doing what is right for the American people and not just for the special interests.

Ronald Reagan once said that "Freedom is the right to question and change the established way of doing things. It is the continuous revolution of the marketplace. It is the understanding that allows us to recognize shortcomings and seek solutions." He spoke these words to university students in Moscow in 1988. It was a message they needed to hear in Russia then, and it is a message that we need to heed in Washington now.

President Reagan possessed an unshakeable faith in America's spirit that was more durable than the prevailing political sentiments of his time, and he became President to prove it. His confidence was a tonic to men who had come home eager to put the Vietnam War behind us and for our country to do likewise. His was a faith that shouted to tyrants, "tear down this wall." And when walls were all I had for a world, his faith in our country gave me hope in a desolate place.

It was the faith he shared with my friend, Mike Christian, a humble and wise American, to whom I will always remain indebted.

My friends, we can achieve whatever task we set for our country. I honor Ronald Reagan's and Mike Christian's faith in America, the greatest nation and greatest force for good on earth. If we remember that then all will be well for the values we hold dear and for our country.

These are critical times for the security of our country, the strength of our economy, and the future of our courts. This is not the time to turn our back on the progress we've made on the issues that matter most. The voters who have offered their support to the Republican Party for decades deserve the chance to unify around a candidate who has demonstrated a consistent commitment to the values that are the reason for that support. I would like to be that candidate. I have a record that can be trusted. I have the experience to lead from day one, and I am committed to victory in the race ahead. Thank you for the support you've offered to me and to the Republican Party over the years, and for the opportunity today to earn that support one more time.

Thank you and God bless you.

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